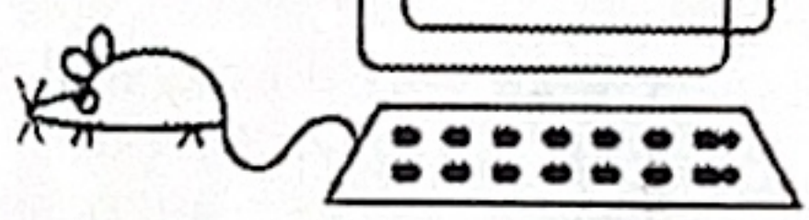
ASIFA EAST

The International Animated Film Society

ANYMATOR

June 2002 Issue



ASIFA EAST June Events :

*** New Animation from National Film Board of Canada**

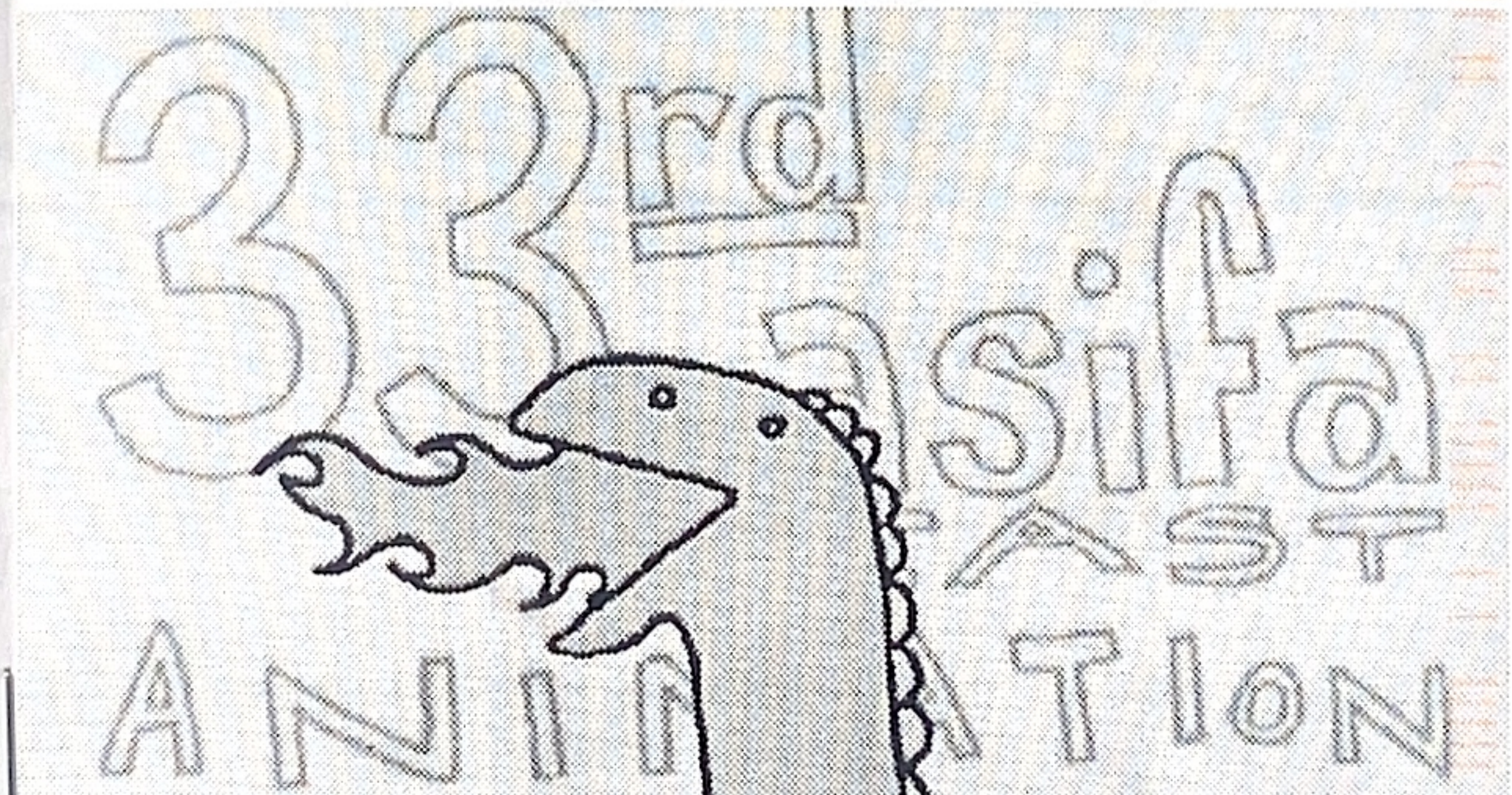
***An Evening with Candy Kugel**

See Details inside !

Also in this issue...

* Q&A with "Fairly Oddparents" creator **Butch Hartman**

* Tribute to **Chuck Jones** by Richard Gorey, Jr.



Exclusive Inside Coverage of ASIFA-East's 33rd Annual Animation Festival !

ASIFA East

The International Animated Film Society Northeast /New York Chapter

A Program of the New York Foundation For The Arts

President:
David B. Levy
c/o Blue's Clues
1633 Broadway 4th fl
New York, NY 10019

e-mail: David.Levy@nick.com
Call: (212) 654-6859
Fax: (212) 654-4720

Vice President/Programming:
Barbara Kearney
(212) 654-6184

Membership Secretary:
Ila Abramson
(212) 846-6090

International Executive Board:
Antran Mangoonian
Antran.Mangoonian@disney.com
Wendy Jackson Hall
wendy@jacksonhall.com

Treasurer:
Toni Ty$en
(212) 722-0069

Executive Board

Ila Abramson
Howard Beckerman
Iris Beckerman
Anne Bobroff-Hajal
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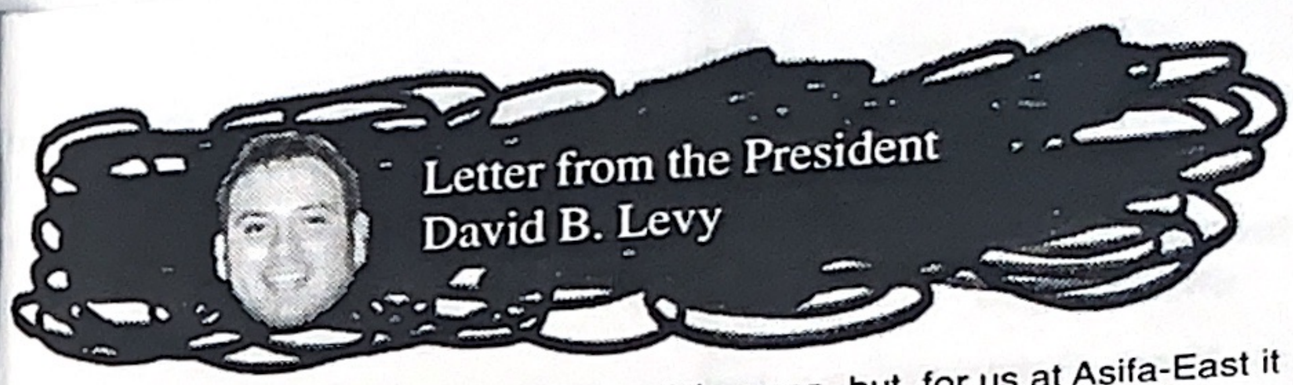
Michael Sporn
Toni Tysen
Tom Warburton

Acting Newsletter Editors:
David B. Levy & Dale Clowdis
(212) 654-6859
David.Levy@nick.com

Contributing Staff:
Barbara Kearney, Howard Beckerman, Janet Benn,Samantha Berger, Toni Tysen, Richard Gorey, Jr.
Webmaster: Tarik Cherkaoui
tarik@inorbit.com

for Asifa-East on line: www.asifaeast.com

Anny Mator by Howard Beckerman



For most people, June marks the middle of the year...but, for us at Asifa-East it is the end of another season. In July and August we take a much needed break. A break from what, you ask? Check out this year in review:

September- On 9/05/01 we had our first board meeting of the season. Fall events were discussed and planned. It was business as usual. Our September event (Co/sponsored with WIA and presented by NYWIFT), the premiere of "Independent Spirits", a documentary on the life and works of Faith Hubley, was to be bitter sweet. It fell only a couple of weeks after the attacks on September 11 and it was to be one of the last public appearances of Legendary filmmaker, Faith Hubley, who was to pass away in December.

October- The open screening reared its ugly head (and britches) once again...and that meant that we had five more weeks of winter ahead of us. Kidding. New films, works-in-progress and long forgotten treasures were unearthed to the joy of the crowd. Join us again next fall for the return of the Open Screening (be on the lookout for more treats from the ever-productive spoof-master Dale Clowdis). October also brought us Dean Lennert's exclusive interview with Dick Williams! In the same newsletter, Asifa-East proposed that animators contribute a 30 second film on their reaction to the events of Sept 11.

November- My checkbook is still smoking from the check I wrote for a SpongeBob cel. Auctioneer Tom Warburton came to town and dazzled us with more art then you could shake a stick at (if that's your idea of a good time).

December- Bill Plympton = Holiday Cheer? We all gathered to drink a toast to Bill on the eve of the premiere of his Cartoon Network production, "12 Tiny Christmas Tales." Bill's next Christmas Special will be called "12 Tiny Tims". No, I made that up. Early in the next year, Bill premiered his third fully animated feature, "Mutunt Aliens"(at Cinema Village), and a brand new short, "Parking" at the our festival. Sure.... but what has he done lately?

January- The long awaited debut of Howard Beckerman's book, "Animation, The Whole Story". Howard's one man show played second banana to no one....except, well...a banana. The only ones to run out of this event were the books themselves. Fear not, copies of the book are available from booksellers Shakespeare & Company.

Letter from the President (continued

February- The newsletter brought us up-to-date on the on-line adventures Xeth (Queer Duck/Bulbo) Fineberg, and also featured Michael Sporn's touching tribute to Faith Hubley, and Holly Klein's animated soap-opera adventures.

March- Richard Williams! Richard Williams! Richard Williams! His mini-masterclass may have been the event of the year! Luckily, I'm not here to decide. Fight amongst yourselves. Not to be outdone, Tom Sito stopped b SVA to screen Osmosis Jones and kibitz about the LA scene. Just to show how much we can handle, we managed to cram the three festival judging screenings into March, as well. Whew!!

April- Chris Wedge talked to us about the making of his box-office champ, Age. Mammoth thanks to Anne Bobroff for going the distance and arrangir this super event!
Our second event of the month was the premiere of the Statement (9/11) films. We gathered to watch the films, meet their makers and were refreshe by provisions arranged by Rich Gorey. In the newsletter, John R. Dilworth proved he was ready for his close up by graciously sitting for a lengthy 'Q a A'. In a great article, Michael Sporn, wrote on the part we are unwittingly playing in the "demise" of traditional animation. However, he still noted ra of hope. Masako Kanayama came up with the first viable plan to bail out t airline industry: travel to Berlin to see a film.

May- Our Show of Shows: The 33rd Asifa-East Animation Festival! Our ki friends at DMA and Mr. Fran Krause provided the memorable festival openings (see artwork inside!). Sure, nobody jumped onto the stage this y (Mo, where were you when we needed you?) but, that didn't mean we didn have fun. We didn't not have fun until about 11:00 that night. Then for dessert, only a few days later, John Canemaker presented the films of the late Richard Protovin at the Donnell Media Center.

June- Last but not least, we screen new animation from the NFBC on June 18! All are invited! The very next day (June 19 for all you detail oriented people) we are proud to co/sponsor an evening with your friend and mine, Candy Kugel! Join us and find out the buzz on our favorite buzy bee. This newsletter, in your hands, serves as the program to our May Festival. Cherish it! Cherish is the word that I choose to describe. Yeah, I like sixtie music. What gave me away? Also, check out Samantha Berger's exclusiv interview with the Fairly Odd (creator) Butch Hartman and Rich Gorey's tribute to Chuck Jones. See ya next year!

Tuesday,
June 18
at 7:00 PM
SVA
209 E. 23rd Street
Amphitheater

ASIFA EAST Presents...

NEW ANIMATION FROM THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

Hosted by Mary Jane Terrell

Program Film List :

GLASSES 22:32 Brian Duchscherer. The problems of not seeing things the way every one else does when you are a kid.

CHRISTOPHER, PLEASE CLEAN UP YOUR ROOM! 6:58 Vincent Gauthier. A messy room that gets out of control.

A HUNTING LESSON 13:04 Jacques Drouin. A reverence for life learned from an unusual source.

BLACK SOUL 9:47 Martine Chartrand. Exhilarating immersion into images of Black culture and history.

SCIENCE, PLEASE! 1 Minute of Science calculated to wake up science students

THE BOY WHO SAW THE ICEBERG 8:49 Paul Driessen. Trip from reality to fantasy with a boy with an over-active imagination.

THE HUNGRY SQUID 14:31 John Weldon. Madcap, whimsical version of "My dog ate my homework".

A MONSTER'S CALLING 5:26 Louise Johnson. The different faces of the monster under the bed that we all fear.

BULLY DANCE 10:14 Janet Perlman. The story behind the power plays at the playground.

STRANGE INVADERS (Oscar Nominated) 8:27 Cordell Barker. Couple wishes for a baby and gets one that is out-of-this-world.

??? and AAA

Everything's coming up Butch!

A Q & A Interview with *Fairly Oddparents* creator, Butch Hartman

- by Samantha Berger

I will never forget the day I met Butch Hartman. He came to Nickelodeon to give us a personally presented preview of his new show the Fairly Oddparents. We all gathered in a conference room and this adorable guy, wh looks like Superman in a black turtleneck, walks to the front and says, "Hi, my name's Butch, and I make the show about the fairies."

With its fast pace, clever writing, and universal kid theme (being able to have anything you wish for), the Fairly Oddparents became a quick hit. Since its launch a year ago, and with only the initial 6 episodes in rotation, Butch's show managed to climb the ratings and emerge as one of the top 'toon shows among kids 2-11. Now, with a second show on the way, Danny Phantom, everything's coming up Butch.

Butch took time out of his hella-demanding schedule do a little Q & A. (Thank you, Mr. Hartman.)

SB: What does the timeline/highlight reel look like of Butch Hartman's life up until now?
BH: It's basically that shot of the guy from ABC's Wild World of Sports comin down the ski jump and crashing. Now picture that with me as the skier...and the last second a fairy comes in and catches me in a net.

SB: When did you first know what you wanted to be when you grew up?
BH: After I jumped off the roof of my house with a towel cape around my nec and couldn't fly, I realized I should try for something more earth based. I seriously remember getting lots of attention in Kindergarten after the teacher asked everyone in class to draw a picture of her. I did what I was told, drew a picture...and she raved about how good it was all day long. I remember thinking...hmmm...good drawings...attention from adults...I think that's where it started. Funny how my business now is getting attention from kids

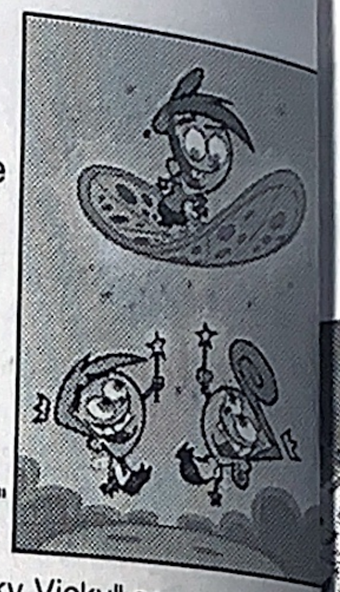
SB: When do you remember first having the concept for this show?
BH: When I was working on "Johnny Bravo" at Hanna-Barbera. The show was winding down after the first season and we didn't think we'd be coming back to do any more. I thought...I need a job...I'll think of a show. But a show that doesn't need too much work. I thought...hmmm...story ideas...story ideas...I want a show that can go anywhere and can do anything. Magic! That'll be easy! With magic, I can do any story I want! That's pretty much where the initial concept came from...

SB: Describe an average day for you.
BH: Take my youngest daughter to school – preschool – get to work. Look over storyboards, make changes. Look over scripts for new episodes, make changes. Go to the bathroom. Look over music for new episodes, make changes. Write new stories, make changes. Look over exposure sheets, make changes, go to the bathroom...etc. Basically an entire day of changing and adjusting everything until it feels like it will make a good episode of "Fairly Oddparents". Then, when that's done, I start coming up with story ideas for Danny Phantom. Write with my story editor until about 7:30 pm. Go home – my wife has already picked up my daughter from school – eat dinner, play with my kids – I have TWO daughters, mind you. Kiss them and my wife goodnight, then go to my home office and work until 1:00 am. Start over the next day.

SB: How much are you involved in every creative step, and how much do you relinquish to others?
BH: I am intensely involved in EVERY step of the process. From the initial concept of an episode, through the script writing process, storyboard, recording, timing, editing, music and sound effects, I oversee everything. Whether that's good or bad...well, you be the judge. I relinquish the bulk of work involved in each actual step to individual directors, writers, artists, etc. but I look through everything and makes changes accordingly. I suppose I'm a control freak. If you have any suggestions let me know.
But let me edit them first.

SB: When you built your team, where did you find your people?
BH: Most of them were manufactured right here at Nickelodeon. Others were from galaxies far, far away. And if you met some of them, you'd understand just how far away. Seriously, though, I have the best crew in the business. They all care very deeply about making a good product.

SB: How long does the process of writing an episode take and what steps are usually involved?
BH: Writing takes about 5 weeks. From initial premise to outline through two or three drafts of the final script.



SB: Which episode of FOP is your favorite so far? How come?
BH: Actually I have several favorites: "Chin Up" which is the debut of Jay Leno as The Crimson Chin. "Power Mad" where Timmy goes into a video game (look for the cool "Matrix" shot.) "Spaced Out" which is the debut of Mark the Alien from Yugopotamia. "Boys in the Band" which has the "Icky Vicky" song at the end and one episode called "Timvisible" where Timmy becomes...you guessed it...invisible. Not that the other ones aren't great, but these all stand out to m as having all the important elements firing on all cylinders: good story, jokes design work, effects, music, and most importantly, character.

SB: Can we have a sneak peak, brief synopsis of Danny Phantom?
BH: It's about a 14-year-old boy with ghost powers – flying, invisibility, phas through walls, etc. - that just-so-happens to hunt real ghosts. It's Johnny Quest meets Ghostbusters.

SB: What do you like best about it so far?
BH: What I like the most is that's it's a completely different show from Fairly Oddparents. It would have been a cinch to do the same thing, I'm just glad each show has it's own vibe. Phantom has a definite action/comic book ang which is something I've always wanted to do.

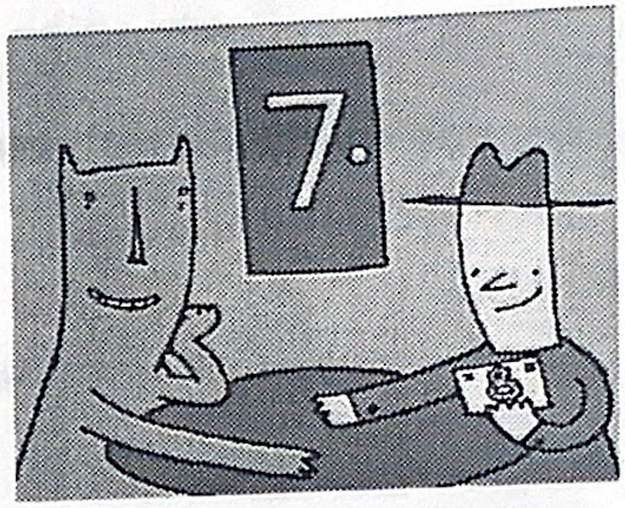
SB: What have been some of your favorite cartoons throughout your life?
BH: Anything by Tex Avery. The Simpsons. Chuck Jones Bugs Bunny. Anything from the early Warner days. A lot of early Hanna Barbera stuff as well: Space Ghost. The Herculoids. Wacky Races. And "Batman" the animated series, of course.

SB: What other books, movies, artists, and creators inspire you most?
BH: I love sci-fi stuff by James Cameron. I love "The Matrix". The original "Superman" with Christopher Reeve. "Star Wars" and "Empire Strikes Back" are my faves of the trilogy. I love the comic book artists Alex Ross, Frank Quitely and Bruce Timm. One of my favorite creators is James L. Brooks. He one of the guys responsible for some of my favorite sitcoms: "Taxi" "Cheers" and "The Simpsons".

SB: What advice would you give to someone pitching a show?
BH: Never give up. ALWAYS believe in your product. If you don't buy it, nobody else will.

ASIFA-East Festival Winners 2002

FESTIVAL OPENING #1,
by DMA



FESTIVAL OPENING #2,
by Fran Krause

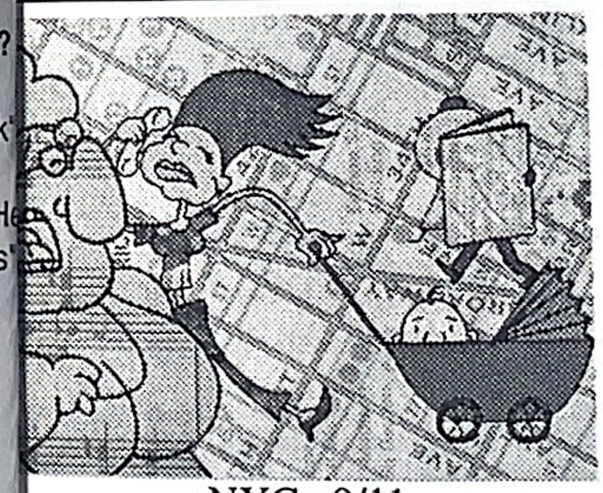
STUDENT FILMS

1st Prize
ASH SUNDAY, Corrie Francis

2nd Prize
SHADOWPLAY, Dan Blank

3rd Prize
EYE SPY, Biljana Labovic

EYE SPY



NYC : 9/11

Charles Samu Award
NYC : 9/11, John Schnall

Charles Samu Award Honorable Mention
DAD I'M NOT GAY, Amanda Baehr

Continued Support of Independent Animation Award
John Columbus

COMMERCIALS & PROMOTIONAL FILMS

1st Prize
CHRISTMAS SONG, Maciek Albrecht

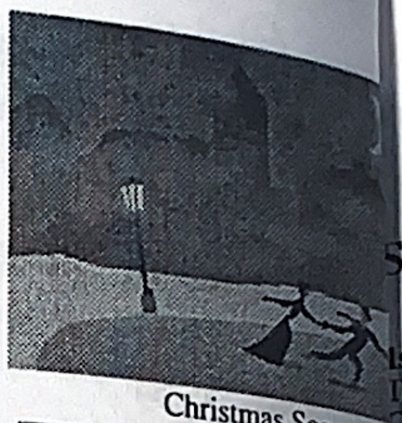
2nd Prize
CHARMIN: "PASS IT ON",
Acme Filmworks/Joanna Quinn

3rd Prize
EARTHLINK: "DARWIN",
Acme Filmworks/Wendy Tilby & Amanda Forbis

Excellence in Design
MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS,
Maciek Albrecht

Excellence in Animation
CHARMIN: "FLAMINGO",
Acme Filmworks/Joanna Quinn

Excellence in Humor
GRIEVING ON A JET PLANE,
JJ Sedelmaier Productions



Christmas Song

Merry Little Christmas

Grieving on a Jet Plane

ASIFA-East Festival 2002
Statement Films:

1- Irra Verbitzky My Nightmare 9/11/01 4:00 AM- Irra Verbitzky
2- 9.11.01- Angie Mayo
3- Snap- Nouri Zander/ Maria Scavullo
4- This Is You On War Media- (Anonymous)
5- Body And Soul- Leyla Modirzadeh
6- Safety Threatened- Dale Clowdis
7- The Way The Twig Is Bent.... -David B. Levy
8- Untitled- Richard Dezinno
9- Towards Ground Zero: One Month Later- Karl Staven
10- Not Gone- Steven Dovas
11- NYC: 9/11- John Schnall (Winner of Charles Samu Award- 2002)
12- Liberty Vs. Tyranny- Dave McCutcheon
13- The Fear News Network- Ward Sutton
14- Voices Of Spring- Accelerated Images/ Bob Lyons
15- Healing Mandala for 9/11/01- Don Duga
16- Reflect- Danny Kimanyen
17- My Thoughts On September 11, 2001- Rich Gorey
18- Three Blind Mice- Buzzco Associates
19- Change- David Billings

SPONSORED FILMS

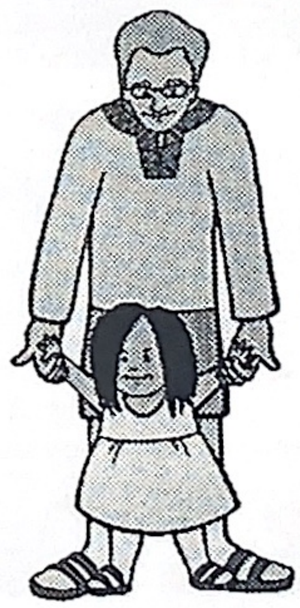
1st Prize
THE NARRATOR THAT RUINED CHRISTMAS,
Curious Pictures

2nd Prize
12 TINY CHRISTMAS TALES,
Bill Plympton/Cartoon Network

3rd Prize
UTICA ZOO,
Fran Krause/Cartoon Network

Excellence in Education
Blue's Clues "Colors Everywhere",
Nickelodeon Digital Animation Studio

Excellence in Design
DAD, I'M NOT GAY!,
Amanda Baehr/Robert Kopecky/Oxygen



Dad, I'm Not Gay!

The Narrator That Ruined Christmas

12 Tiny Christmas Tales

Utica Zoo

Blue's Clues "Colors Everywhere"

INDEPENDENT FILMS

1st Prize
PARKING, Bill Plympton

2nd Prize
MONA, MON AMOUR, Michael Sporn/Patti Stren

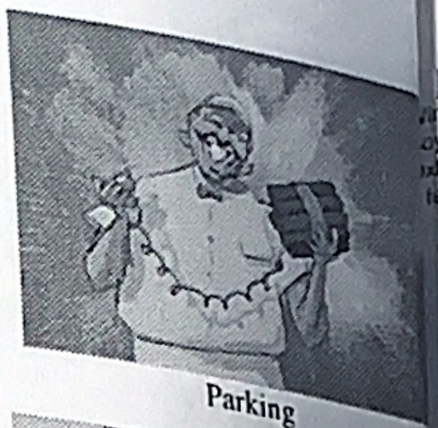
3rd Prize
DRUNKY: IN THROUGH THE OUT DOOR,
Aaron Augenblick Studios

Excellence in Experimental Techniques
TERRA INCOGNITA,
Stephanie Maxwell/ O Company

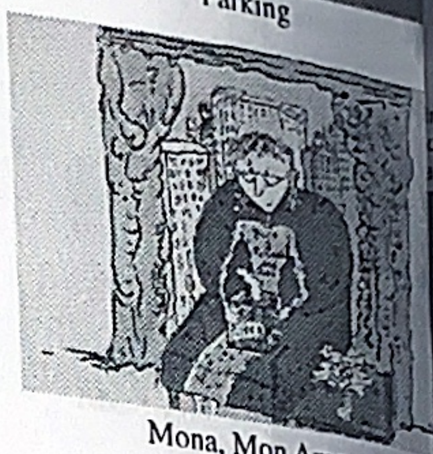
IN TRANSIT, Doug Vitarelli

Excellence in Design
THE DIGNIFIED DEVIL IN SHIRLEY TEMPLE,
Aaron Augenblick Studios

"ROBOT STORIES" TITLE SEQUENCE,
Daniel M. Kanemoto/Ex Mortis Films



Parking

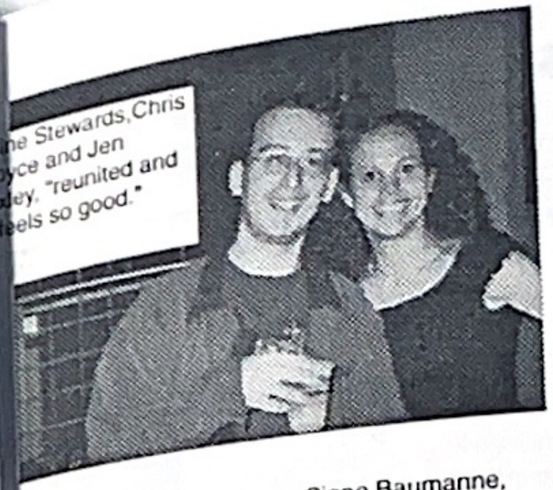


Mona, Mon Amour

Drunky: In Through the Out Door

Dignified Devil in Shirley Temple

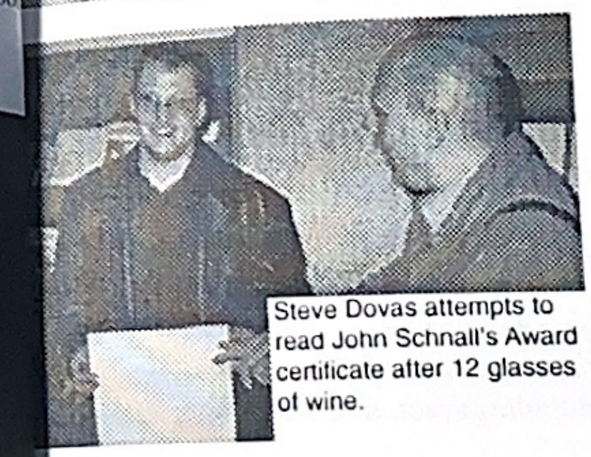
In Transit



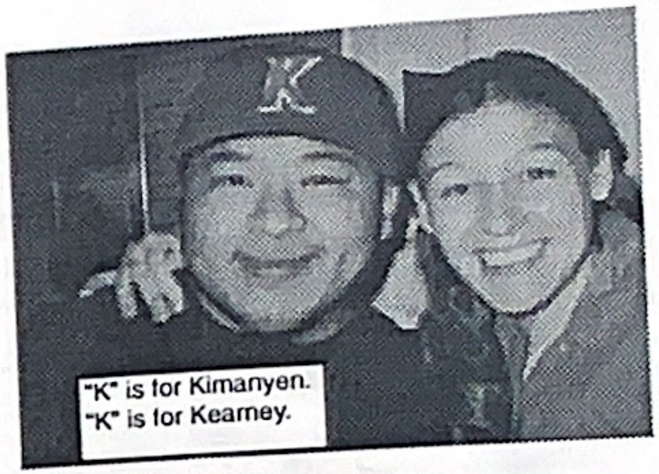
...ne Stewards, Chris ...yce and Jen ...ley. "reunited and ...feels so good."

...ian Urquidez, El Presidente, Signe Baumanne, ...d Bill Plympton make a human barricade around ...e cheese table.

Magik in the air. Maciek Albrecht and Yvette Kaplan.

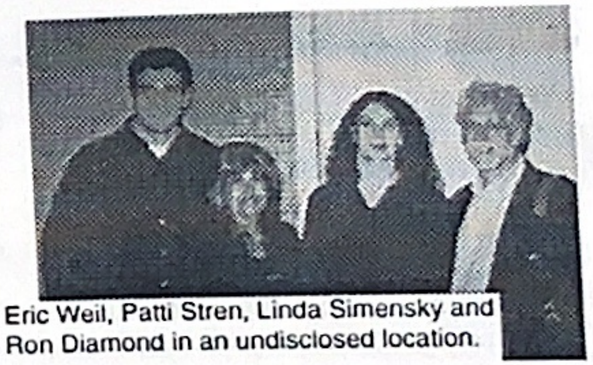


Steve Dovas attempts to read John Schnall's Award certificate after 12 glasses of wine.

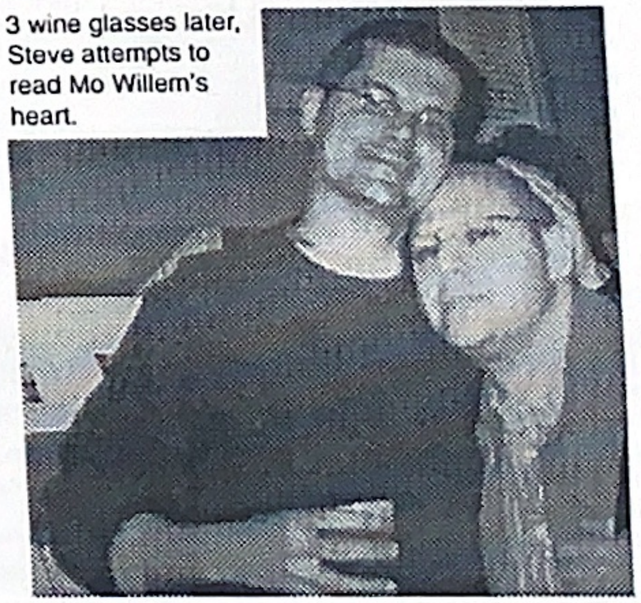


"K" is for Kimanyen.
"K" is for Kearney.

Amy Handler and Fran Krause strategize on rushing the cheese table.



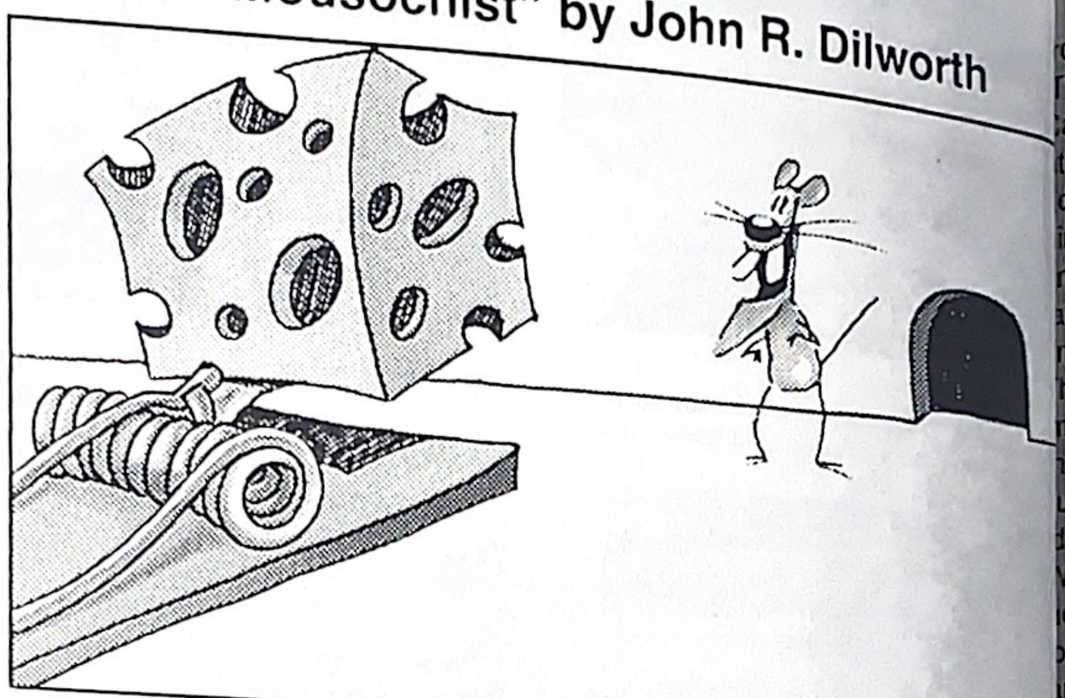
Eric Weil, Patti Stren, Linda Simensky and Ron Diamond in an undisclosed location.



3 wine glasses later, Steve attempts to read Mo Willem's heart.

Special Thanks to : Festival Co-Chairs, Linda Simensky and Nancy Lennert, Cartoon Network, Jen Oxley (Party Planner), Anezka Sebek (our host), Toni Tysen (ace photographer).

Best in Show 2002
"The Mousochist" by John R. Dilworth



EVENTS

An Evening with Candy Ku

Wednesday, June 19 at 6:3
DV Dojo, 310 Bowery (near Blee
Admission Free to ASIFA-East, WIA/NY and NYWIFT mem

* Who made the first vibrant MTV ID, and all of the spots until 1985?
* Who has possibly had more animated shorts shown at the New York Film Festiv Lincoln Center than any other producer? And whose vivacious short, "Fast Food M has been selected for Channel Thirteen's Reel NY TV series?
* Whose innovative company, Buzzco Associates, will be the subject of a major etrospective at the Ottawa International Animation festival in September of 2002?
* Who has been in the business of animation production in New York City since 19
* Who has exciting work to show and an inspiring story to tell of her experiences a woman in animation in New York?

CANDY KUGEL

Candy Kugel first got interested in animation as a first-year art student at Rhode I School of Design, when she heard Jack Zander give a lecture and demonstration a University. As a frustrated actress and avid aspiring artist, she saw this as a perfec opportunity to have her drawings act for her.

"In the late 1970s there were two distinct groups doing animation in New York: th who were primarily doing television commercials and the independents who were m films from grant money. The independents generally came from art schools and film schools that had animation departments which propelled them into the world of film and teaching. The studio animators generally came from a tradition of apprentices

om the beginning I straddled both worlds." Candy Kugel, "The Creation of an Icon: TV" Animation World Magazine 1/1/98.

Candy's first job was with Perpetual Motion Pictures as a go-fer (an old term for tern") for $25/week and a promise to stay out of the way. At Perpetual both during d after obtaining her BFA degree, she rose to in-betweener and eventually to imation director. From 1974-1979 she was responsible for a 1 minute "political ntoon" for the news show "Weekend" every month. Candy stated, "I've always said t NBC paid for my animation education. The pieces got more involved and mplicated, as I learned and gained experience."

hroughout her professional career, Candy has always experimented with independent ns of her own. While at Perpetual Motion Pictures she made "InBetweening America" ally finished and recently featured at the New York Film Festival of 2001) and dition"(1981). "I felt that I was an independent animator and found the freedom in dependent film exhilarating" said Candy.

When Buzz Potamkin formed his own studio, Buzzco Productions, he invited Candy d Vincent Cafarelli to be his creative team and there she created the seminal MTV rk. Candy wrote, "In the 16 years since [MTV's] birth, I have found it curious that my me has rarely been linked with these early efforts, even though I designed and rected all of the spots."

From 1985 to the present Candy and Vincent have continued as a creative team at uzzco Associates along with their partner Marilyn Kraemer, executive producer. Since 987 they have created 8 more shorts, with music by composer Lanny Meyers. During is time Candy also contributed to the animated collaborations of David Ehrlich's nimated Self-Portraits"(1989) and Mo Willems' "Life"(1999). In 2001 Buzzco sociates made their first Flash movie for the web, "Piscis". And they continue to date the site with more political cartoons: "I'm back where I started with the Weekend eces!" says Kugel.

me and see some of Candy Kugel's independent and commercial work, including the ort films "InBetweening America" and "(it was…) Nothing At All"
d hear her talk of her experiences in the New York animation industry over the last 30 ars.

net Benn, who has been working in animation almost as long as Candy, will host YWIFT'S Conversation. Since 1976, Janet Benn has worked on all kinds of animated oductions in New York City, most recently as a Checker on the Cartoon Network ries Courage the Cowardly Dog. In 1998, she moved to western Massachusetts, and ntinues her personal and freelance work while teaching production courses at the iversity of Massachusetts / Amherst, Hampshire College and Smith College. roughout her career she has found time for arts advocacy and women's issues, as a ard member, volunteer and paid staff member of several arts organizations, including ew York Women in Film and Television, Women Make Movies, the Society for imation Studies, and Association Internationale du Film d'Animation (A.S.I.F.A.).

Jonesin' For Chuck

by Rich Gorey

In a year filled with transitions, loss and confusion, animators and filmgoers the wo
over also marked the passing of master animator Chuck Jones, who died recently
age 89.

Ask anyone and they'll tell you they're familiar with his work. Jones' unique, famou
quirky, and distinctive films transcend the medium- and the genre. His name is as
known outside the animation industry as within.

The appeal of Chuck Jones' films lies in their universal humor and polished artistic
craftsmanship. The reason they will survive is the depth and emotional complexity
possess, for the films Jones created speak to qualities in audiences that are far m
personal than the ones many other animated films address.

In the late thirties, Walt Disney and his artists defined and refined- to a large exter
technical aspects and standards of the medium. In the early forties, the Warner ar
broke free from these realistic refinements and discovered the bite and sarcasm th
enabled their films to reach an audience the Disney films somehow couldn't.

Jones, however, was the first director - and perhaps the best ever- to understand
underlying psychological freedom of the animated film. He used the extreme
exaggerations and distortions possible in animation to reveal the needs, frustratio
and despairs that drove his characters to their triumphs -and tragedies. More than
other cartoon filmmaker, Jones sought to explore, through his short films, the frag
neurotic side of human nature. Look to any of his significant works, and you'll see
common threads of failure, despair, and insecurity.

Other artists and directors exploited the physical and technical aspects of the me
the nature of movement and the laws of cartoon physics. Jones explored himself,
his films are startling for their confessional resonance. Sure, they're about Daffy, a
Porky, and Bugs, but they're really about an artist trying to define himself by disse
his insecurities and doubts in an increasingly public forum. Like Aesop's fables, hi
cartoons are pitiless examinations of human failings and shortcomings in animal
disguise. In this context, Jones' films are the modern myths: the fables of the twe
century.

The Disney and Fleischer films certainly have their emotional complexities, but th
difference is the other films incorporate psychology, Jones' films are about psycho
They're the animated equivalent of self-analysis, and they serve as a dark mirror f
audiences that will see their true selves portrayed- often with unflattering sincerity
brutal candor.

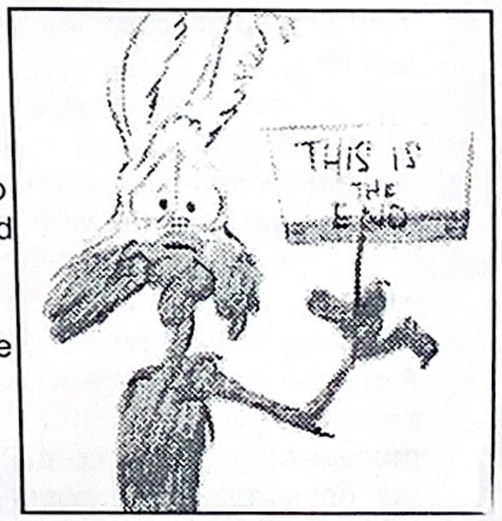
Look to One Froggy Evening, a film many consider to be Jones' masterpiece abo
greed- and the angst that always follows in its wake. The film hints at misfortune
immediately: what is the frog doing in that box? Why has it been hidden away in t
first place, and how has it survived? Unanswerable questions, certainly. Like gree
deceit, and self-delusion, the frog has always been there, and always will be.
Inscrutable, aloof, and maddeningly unconcerned with the machinations of its "ow
the frog- like fate- plays his small part and then stands idly by. Jones has said in
interviews that he himself never quite understood that little frog, and it's to our ben
that he never tried. One Froggy Evening speaks to the pivotal role we play in our
destinies. They'll be watching this film in 2050 A.D. and laughing for the same rea
we do, because, Jones knows, human nature never changes. I find it significant t
the frog isn't the enemy, the greedy worker ultimately sabotages himself, by explo
the frog.

Human nature, in all its contradictions and confusion, seemed to be the common force
which drove many Chuck Jones cartoons. He's described his Road Runner series as
being "about failure…they're not about how to catch a road runner, they're about how
not to catch a road runner." How ironic that this series, which speaks so eloquently to
failure, is such a structural and artistic success. Here is the compelling dichotomy of
Jones' work: the obsession with limitations and insecurities in films that are
distinguished by their superb craftsmanship and razor-sharp timing and technique.
With few exceptions, most of Jones' films are highly polished gems. They employ every
facet and tool of the filmmaker's art to make their points and deliver their messages.
Visually, they are often superb, but in terms of their haunting subtexts, they achieve
artistic heights that have little to do with surface gloss. Conceptually, they're often
alarmingly grotesque.

A defining aspect of the Jones style is the director's curious preoccupation with pain-
both emotional and physical. Yes, he always brings the coyote back to life after every
disaster, but he seems to take a kind of morbid delight in the dread of physical harm.
Often, the moments we remember are not the splat, but the woeful expression on the
coyote's face just before the splat: the dawning recognition of his mistake and the
awful expectation of agony. This vivid exploration of the rigors and exquisite extremes
of physical punishment shows up again and again in the director's films. There's the
relentless torture of Daffy in Duck, Rabbit, Duck, (another character who's a victim of
himself) and the repeated, almost horrific antagonism shown to Bugs in the opening
minutes of Long Haired Hare. And who could forget the suffering inflicted on little Max,
the pathetic dog in How the Grinch Stole Christmas?

Directors like Mckimson and Clampett used the cartoon distortion of the body to
extreme, often striking effect, but only Jones seems to be aware of the implications of
the pain he inflicts on his characters. The climax of Jones' savage Chow Hound, in
which a tormented cat finally turns the tables on a brutal dog; "This time, I didn't forget
the gravy…" is a moment of appalling physical horror, one of the most morbid in all
animated films. But this kind of gothic exaggeration is a Jones trademark, from the
creepy distortion in that terrific close up of the Grinch getting his "wonderful, awful"
idea, to Baby Finster holding his breath and turning purple, then blue, then green (as
does the pompous Giovanni Jones, in Long Haired Hare).

From these to countless other moments of body horror, Jones work seems
preoccupied with the dire physical consequences of bad decisions- and bad behavior.
In their own way, his shorts serve as seven-minute lessons in morality and retribution,
in sin and payback, in aggression and counter-attack. "Of course you realize this
means war," went the common refrain, but it also meant humiliation, social ostracism,
psychic discomfort, and the phobic dread of further –
perhaps worse- horrors.



Jones was the first to discover that Bugs Bunny
needed to be provoked in order to win the audience
over. He understood the significance of an obstacle to
a character's goal, and the importance of imbalance to
the physical comedy of confrontation. Like Chaplin and
Keaton, Jones the comedian recognized the stylistic
contrasts provided by larger villains, and the comedic
possibilities inherent in bullies. Still, when he made the
bully his main character, as in The Grinch, he had
already established the psychology of failure and the
predisposition to catastrophe, by giving his villains
goals which were destined to bring them only more

isolation and misery.
This moral complexity is what makes Chuck Jones films worthy of repeated viewin
future study. Other directors tried and succeeded in making us laugh, but Jones
encouraged us to ask ourselves "Why am I laughing?" His visual humor was as sh
and as clean as that of the other Warners directors, but his subtext is what define
style, even more than his trademark visual idioms (easily recognizable eyes, and b
flat colors, especially in the sixties.)
One recognizes his films by their defining awareness of limitations, even while the
soaring past those limitations artistically. His films are remembered for their one-li
rather than their pictorial beauty, though a few of Jones short films are true techni
masterpieces.
What's Opera, Doc, for instance, another of his most revered films, is a remarkab
elaborate re-staging of Wagner's Ring opera, designed visually to resemble a stag
performance. But the film ultimately becomes something much more cinematic in
execution. In his attempt to create a "theatrical" experience, Jones has surpassed
overcome the limitations of that form, and given his audience an experience in so
music, movement, color, and subjectivity that is decidedly cinematic in its sensibil
But another element of this film's success is music, which, as Jones matured, bec
more and more integral tool in his communication with the audience. Baton Bunny
Rabbit of Seville, and especially the Grinch, rely heavily- almost predominantly- o
music: it is the primary driving force behind these works.
Outside of Hitchcock, few filmmakers have reached such artistic and creative heig
while exploring such emotional lows. This speaks to the curious imbalance in Jon
that here was a consummate craftsman, whose work exhibited a polish and exact
unequalled in American animation, in short, a brilliant success story who ironically
dedicated his whole career to exploring and depicting failure in its many forms.
In fact, some of his most admired works were considered failures at the time of th
release, and only appreciated as innovative years later. While other cartoon direct
were trying to emulate the literalism of the Disney style, Jones broke from tradition
the groundbreaking short The Dover Boys. "They hated it," he said, years later. "...
they hadn't been block-booking theaters, they would have withheld it and thrown
out."
The frenetic cutting, the striking and stark character designs, and stylistic flourishe
which distinguish The Dover Boys were something new in 1942, and in many way
film paved the way for more experiments in movement and cutting which would
ultimately define the Warner Bros. style for years to come.
How were the Warner cartoons different from those of Disney? Look to The Dover
and you'll see all the elements of humor, pacing, sarcasm, and parody that becam
Warner staples. Even the twist ending is there. All that was left was the refinemen
that idea.
The sharpness and sarcasm that defined Jones' later output comes as a revelatio
when one considers his early films at Warners:
the easygoing, pedestrian Sniffles cartoons and his "lost puppy" films of the late t
which seem to be the work of a director still in search of a definable style, but afra
buck established conventions. That he- and others- succeeded so grandly while w
within the confines of the Studio system is remarkable. That his work continues to
screened all over the world is a tribute to his groundbreaking, singular vision.
Along the way, there were some real jewels: Duck Amuck among them, a film whi
examines not only the psychology of the animated character, but the psychology o
process of animation itself. It's another wonderful film about frustration and limitati
but, not surprisingly, it offers a once-in-a-lifetime role for Daffy Duck. It is perhaps

Daffy's finest hour as an actor. Jones, ever the supportive director, knows that if he
challenged his "actors" they'd give him their best. The less Daffy had to work with, the
more successful he became. It is the essence of Jones' genius. "Bugs Bunny is an
inspiration," Jones has said. "Daffy is recognition, as is the coyote."
Just as he challenged his characters, Jones sometimes challenged his audiences, in
some cerebral, adult films which may have been less successful specifically because of
their darker sides. His odd, disturbingly bleak feature Gay Purr-ee is, beneath its
handsome surface gloss, about white slavery: the grooming of an innocent cat from the
country into the unwilling sexual plaything of a wealthy patron. Strange, that this "family"
film comes complete with an oily seducer, a French Madame, and a song performed by
the heroine about suicide, in which she states (in Judy Garland's tortured voice) "River,
river, won't you be my lover/don't let me down." I'm not sure Gay Purr-ee is even a
failure as a film: its' primary flaw seems to be the limit of its appeal. Jones, for once,
seemed not to know who his audience was. These occasional missteps aside, Jones
films are more often than not entertaining, witty, colorful, and ageless. That they appeal
so broadly to such a wide audience speaks to the universality of their themes, though
ironically, Jones seemed to consider them more personal statements.
"I suppose it would be nice if I knew the age and social structure of my audience,"
Jones said in his book Chuck Amuck, "but the truth is, I make cartoons for me."
Lucky for the rest of us, he did, and in the years since their first appearances, we have
made them our own.

RUBEN BOLLING-EVAN DORKIN-SARAH DYER-BOB FINGERMAN-TOM HART-DEAN HASPIEL-KLAUS JANSON-ALEX ROBINSON-TOP SHELF-AND MANY MORE! JAMES KOCHALKA-PETER KUPER-BILL PLYMPTON-TED RA

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